A CBC RESEARCH REPORT

Publications

PUBLIC OPINION IN ENGLISH CANADA ON

CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE CURRENT

UNEMPLOYMENT SITUATION

THE RESULTS OF A NATIONAL SURVEY

DECEMBER 1970

= Canada 3

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Research Department Toronto - Ottawa - Montreal

February 1971



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INTRODUCTION

This is a report on the state of public opinion in English Canada, toward the end of December 1970, on certain aspects of the present unemployment situation. It is a by-product of a more extensive, ongoing study by CBC Research of people's attitudes on various social issues (pollution, abortion, drugs, taxation, linguistic rights, etc.) which have been, or are due to be dealt with on national television.

The current unemployment situation was one such issue. What do people feel are its main causes? Who is felt to be to blame? To what extent is the situation felt to be improving? Or deteriorating? How hopeful are people that things will improve? How likely do they feel it is

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that they themselves may be unemployed in the near future? What steps is it believed should be taken to provide a remedy? Steps by whom? These were some of the questions, within the content of the wider study, for which answers were required.

The main results of this opinion survey on the unemployment issue were presented and discussed on the CBC-TV network program 'Weekend' on January 24, 1971. The report that follows describes how the information was obtained and elaborates on some of the findings.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Respondents in the survey were drawn from a series of population samples which had been selected over the previous two months, October and November 1970, for use by the Corporation for various research purposes as required. First stage sampling was by area proportionate to population size, then on a probability basis by household and thence to the random selection of one person within each selected household. With minor qualifications the total sample is representative of all persons in Canada aged 12 and over whose main language of communication is English, excluding only residents of the province of Newfoundland and of the sparsely populated Yukon and Northwest Territories. Periodic checks have confirmed the reliability of various types of information obtained by CBC Research from area probability

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samples selected by these methods over the past few years. (A similarly drawn sample is maintained for the French-language population but this was not used in this inquiry.)

Since the questions to be asked required more careful scrutiny than can normally be expected of respondents in the conventional door-to-door or telephone survey, and since considered opinions were required rather than 'off the cuff' answers, the inquiry was conducted by mail. Questionnaires were sent to 2300 respondents selected as above - but excluding persons in the 12-17 age group whose opinions were deemed not sufficiently pertinent to include in this survey. A response of just over 73 per cent from mailout produced a base of usable information from 1686 adult respondents.

A copy of the questionnaire is attached. The crucial questions and sub-questions are those numbered 4-7. Questions 1-3 were included for introductory purposes only, question 8 to allow respondents to add any comments they wished to make on the unemployment situation generally.

Two special considerations bear on the results that follow. First, they are generalisable only to English Canada. Second, while it is only a few weeks since the survey was completed (on December 31) much has happened over this period — including the publication of the latest government statistics on unemployment for the months of December and January — that could have affected public opinion on this issue. No claim is therefore made for the applicability of these results beyond the late December period of the actual survey.

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FINDINGS

Detailed tabulations of responses to each of the relevant questions (Q.4 to Q.7) are provided in Appendix A - for the sample as a whole and for various occupational categories. As these tabulations show, there were a few respondents who did not answer all the questions. To facilitate discussion, these 'no answers' have been set aside and the percentage distributions that follow are, literally, based on the total number of persons answering the questions that were asked. The main findings are summarised below:

Optimism-Pessimism

Two questions in the survey were aimed at discovering just how optimistic or pessimistic people were about the unemployment situation.

One question (0.4) was asked of the total sample:

"This time next year, do you think the unemployment situation in Canada will be better, worse or about the same?"

The resultant distribution of opinion:

Better		۰	٠	۰	0	۰	0	0		•	۰	۰	۰	۰	0	0	0	۰	٠	۰	٠	31%
Worse	•		•	۰	•	۰		•	a	0	0	•	۰	۰	•	0		۰	۰			20%
About	t	h	e		s	a	m	e				۰				0		۰		٠		49%



A second question (Q.7) was asked only of those who were gainfully employed at the present time - excluding full-time housewives, retired people, students and others, a residual 60 per cent of the total sample:

"Do you feel there is any real danger of you being unemployed in the next twelve months?"

Three possible choices of answer were given, the distribution of replies being as follows:

Yes,	a gre	at	lang	er	۰	• •	• •	 	 	6%
Yes,	some	dang	ger			• •	• •	 	 	29%
No da	nger							 	 	65%

The situation would thus seem to be that almost 70 per cent of all adults in English Canada see no improvement, and 20 per cent see an actual worsening of the general unemployment situation over the next year. And of those who are earning at the present time, about one—third see at least some danger of their being laid off some time during the next 12 months. Whatever the future actually holds, this certainly indicates a fairly substantial degree of pessimism among the population at large.

Who Is Felt To Be To Blame?

A series of questions (0.5) embodying statements of various possible causes of the current unemployment situation asked respondents:



"How much, do you think, each of the following is to blame for the current unemployment situation in Canada?"

The choices offered were: "very much to blame", "somewhat to blame" or "not to blame". The distributions of answers to the various propositions are shown below:

	Very much to blame	Somewhat to blame	Not to blame	All respondents
	%	%	%	%
Cutbacks in government spending	24	64	12	100
Business concern with higher profits	31	45	24	100
Federal government 'tight money' policies	38	52	10	100
Unfair competition from imported goods	21	43	36	100
Too many people not willing to work hard	33	35	32	100
The state of the U.S. economy and our dependence on it	27	55	18	100
Canadians' unwillingness to invest in their own country	44	40	16	100
Too much immigration to Canada	23	29	48	100
Recent decline in stock exchange prices	8	51	41	100
Union wage demands too high for the economy to bear	59	29	12	100



The most striking feature of this distribution of opinion is the extent to which the explanation, "Union wage demands too high for the economy to bear", was selected more frequently than any of the other possible causes as being very much to blame for the current unemployment situation. Note particularly that, while as many as 59 per cent of English Canadians see these union demands as being very much to blame, the steps taken by the government to fight inflation - "Cutbacks in government spending" and "Federal government tight money policies" - are each felt to be very much to blame by only 24 and 38 per cent respectively.

(As might be expected, these differences were somewhat more marked among 'owners, managers and professionals' and in the so-called 'white-collar' occupations than among 'blue-collar' workers. But even in the latter group there was a greater tendency to attach serious blame for the present unemployment situation to union wage demands than to either of the two government-imposed measures mentioned above. See Appendix A.)

These findings are not easy to interpret unambiguously. One explanation could be that the public is sufficiently economically sophisticated to have resolved the interminable 'cost-push/demand-pull' controversy in favour of 'cost-push'. That is, the unions are seen as pushing up costs and thereby contributing to inflation; the government is seen as fighting inflation by using traditional policies of 'tight money' and spending cutbacks, thereby causing unemployment.



Therefore (according to this line of reasoning) the real villains are labour unions - hence the relatively high proportion of people seeing union demands as being very much to blame for the present crisis.

An alternative explanation, however, and a somewhat more plausible one, is that people's tendency to attribute blame for any particular crisis in the country's economy is largely determined not so much by their ability to see its root causes (which, after all, defy the country's leading economists), but more by their general attitude, whether favorable or unfavorable, toward certain economic institutions and concepts - government, business, labour, taxation, welfare, etc.

Thus, for example, people who have a deep-rooted negative attitude toward labour unions in general are more likely than others, without necessarily having a very clear understanding of the overall situation, to blame the unions for a wide range of economic ills - including, as in this instance, unemployment. This could be the main explanation for the abnormally large amount of blame attributed to "union wage demands..." as indicated above.

Support for this latter interpretation comes from a further analysis of the survey data which cross-checked the answers that respondents had given to each part of question 5 against the answers that they had given to each other part. This showed that those people who felt that the unions were very much to blame for the current unemployment situation tended not to attach much blame to "business concern with



higher profits". And yet, one would think, in a world of oligopoly and branch plants, a concern with profits is surely just as much a cost-push factor as are union wage demands?

This is not in any way to cast doubt on the reliability of the survey results per se. However mistaken or ill-founded any of these opinions may be as to the causes of the present unemployment crisis, these are the opinions that are held.

Concern with the Plight of the Unemployed

As a means of gauging the extent of public concern with the position of the unemployed, and of public feeling as to what needs to be done, respondents were asked to express the intensity of their agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements. The distribution of replies is shown:



	Strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	All respond- ents
	%	%	%	%	%	%
I would be willing to pay more (start paying) unemployment insurance, so that more assistance can be given to the unemployed	5	15	15	30	35	100
The government should spend more money to provide more jobs, even if it means an increase in the taxes that I pay	9	27	17	31	16	100
Enough is already being done to help the unemployed. No more government action is necessary	8	15	16	41	20	100
Many of the unemployed could get jobs if it was not so easy to live on welfare	41	29	9	14	7	100

There are two main points of interest here. In the first place, of those who expressed an opinion on the adequacy of government help to the unemployed, 61 per cent felt the government should be doing more than it is at present. <u>But</u>...only relatively small minorities would be willing to pay more out of their own pockets to this end - 20 per cent to pay more in unemployment insurance, 36 per cent to pay higher



taxes. While there is no necessary conflict in these figures - there are of course ways of assisting the unemployed other than by these two monetary means - it is not improbable that many people in answering these questions have conveniently forgotten, in this as in so many economic matters, that a major source of additional government expenditure required for any purpose is additional public revenue, either as insurance contributions, personal taxation or in other forms.

The second noteworthy feature of the above table concerns the very large proportion of the population of English Canada (70 per cent) who feel that "many of the unemployed could get jobs if it was not so easy to live on welfare" - 41 per cent of respondents agreed strongly with this statement, another 29 per cent felt less strongly but also agreed.

In conventional jargon, one might be tempted to describe this as indication of an "anti-welfare backlash". Here again, such opinions may be conditioned not so much by knowledge of the facts but, as suggested above, by a more subjective personal attitude to the concept involved — in this instance a negative attitude to the concept of "welfare". In any event, whatever may be the basis for such opinions, there can be no doubt that, by the end of December, given the unemployment situation as it was then, the tough-minded view that "many of the unemployed could get jobs if it was not so easy to live on welfare" was a widespread public opinion in English Canada, and one that was held fairly intensely.



SUMMARY

In English Canada, by the end of December 1970, there was evidence of widespread general concern about the unemployment situation, not much optimism about improvements in the near future, a majority belief that union wage demands were more seriously to blame for the present crisis than any other single factor, and a widely and quite strongly held view that over-generous welfare benefits to the unemployed were contributing to the high level of unemployment.



APPENDIX A

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS
4-7 IN THE TOTAL SAMPLE (AGED 18 PLUS)
AND IN DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES

Percentages in these tables are rounded to the nearest whole number hence do not always appear to total 100 per cent



QUESTION 4

"This time next year, do you think that the unemployment situation in Canada will be better, worse or about the same?"

Occupation group	Better	Worse	About the same	No	Total	Base
	%	%	%	%	7	
Owners, managers, professionals	35	14	45	6	100	(179)
'White collar'	31	18	45	6	100	(428)
'Blue collar'	27	23	45	5	100	(308)
Housewife	26	19	47	8	100	(485)
Retired/unemployed	35	11	45	9	100	(141)
Farming	14	32	43	11	100	(76)
Student	30	22	45	3	100	(60)
Others		-	-	-	-	(9)
TOTAL	29	19	46 .	6	100	(1686)



QUESTION 5A

"How much do you think each of the following is to blame for the current unemployment situation in Canada

....Cutbacks in Government spending?"

Occupation Group	Very much to blame	Somewhat to blame	Not to blame	No answer	Total	Base
	7.	%	%	%	%	
Owners, managers, professionals	16	66	13	6	100	(179)
'White collar'	21	61	11	7	100	(428)
'Blue collar'	24	59	8	9	100	(308)
Housewife	25	55	11	9	100	(485)
Retired/unemployed	21	50	13	16	100	(141)
Farming	25	53	9	13	100	(76)
Student	18	67	12	3	100	(60)
Others	-	-	-	-	-	(9)
TOTAL	22	58	11	9	100	(1686)



QUESTION 5B

"How much do you think each of the following is to blame for the current unemployment situation in Canada

....Business concern with higher profits?"

Occupation Group	Very much to blame	Somewhat to blame	Not to blame	No answer	Total	Base
	%	7.	%	%	z	
Owners, managers, professionals	24	37	32	7	100	(179)
'White collar'	25	39	27	9	100	(428)
'Blue collar'	33	43	16	8	100	(308)
Housewife	27	44	19	11	100	(485)
Retired/unemployed	30	38	16	16	100	(141)
Farming	26	37	21	16	100	(76)
Student	23	53	18	4	100	(60)
Others	-	-	-	-	-	(9)
TOTAL	27	42	21	10	100	(1686)



QUESTION 5C

"How much do you think each of the following is to blame for the current unemployment situation in Canada

.... Federal Government tight money policies?"

Occupation Group	Very much to blame	Somewhat to blame	Not to blame	No answer	Total	Base
	7.	*	%	%	z	
Owners, managers, professionals	32	55	9	4	100	(179)
'White collar'	35	46	10	9	100	(428)
'Blue collar'	37	46	7	10	100	(308)
Housewife	36	47	7	10	100	(485)
Retired/unemployed	31	45	6	18	100	(141)
Farming	22	53	12	13	100	(76)
Student	37	52	7	4	100	(60)
Others	-	-	-	-	-	(9)
TOTAL	35	48	8	9	100	(1686)



QUESTION 5D

"How much do you think each of the following is to blame for the current unemployment situation in Canada

.... Unfair competition from imported products?"

Occupation Group	Very much to blame	Somewhat to blame	Not to blame	No answer	Total	Base
	%	%	%	%	%	
Owners, managers, professionals	15	35	41	8	100	(179)
'White collar'	19	39	34	9	100	(428)
'Blue collar'	21	38	30	10	100	(308)
Housew1fe	22	41	27	11	100	(485)
Retired/unemployed	20	38	24	18	100	(141)
Farming	13	38	36	13	100	(76)
Student	10	42	40	8	100	(60)
Others	-	ent.	-	-	-	(9)
TOTAL	19	39	32	10	100	(1686)



QUESTION 5E

"How much do you think each of the following is to blame for the current unemployment situation in Canada

.... Too many people not willing to work hard?"

Occupation Group	Very much to blame	Somewhat to blame	Not to blame	No answer	Total	Base
	%	%	%	%	%	
Owners, managers, professionals	23	26	45	6	100	(179)
'White collar'	31	32	29	7	100	(428)
'Blue collar'	29	33	29	8	100	(308)
Housewife	31	36	24	9	100	(485)
Retired/unemployed	38	28	21	13	100	(141)
Farming	39	33	17	11	100	(76)
Student	15	27	55	3	100	(60)
Others	-	-	-	-	-	(9)
TOTAL	30	32	29	8	100	(1686)



QUESTION 5F

"How much do you think each of the following is to blame for the current unemployment situation in Canada

.... The state of the U.S. economy and our dependence on it?"

Occupation Group	Very much to blame	Somewhat to blame	Not to blame	No answer	Total	Base
	7.	%	%	%	7.	
Owners, managers, professionals	31	48	17	3	100	(179)
'White collar'	25	52	16	8	100	(428)
'Blue collar'	26	48	17	10	100	(308)
Housewife	25	49	15	11	100	(485)
Retired/unemployed	12	54	18	16	100	(141)
Farming	12	51	24	13	100	(76)
Student	48	40	8	4	100	(60)
Others	-	-	-	-	-	(9)
TOTAL	25	49	16	9	100	(1686)



OUESTION 5G

"How much do you think each of the following is to blame for the current unemployment situation in Canada

 \ldots Canadians' unwillingness to invest in their own country?"

Occupation Group	Very much to blame	Somewhat to blame	Not to blame	No answer	Total	Base
	%	%	%	%	%	
Owners, managers, professionals	33	41	22	4	100	(179)
'White collar'	40	37	16	8	100	(428)
'Blue collar'	45	35	12	7	100	(308)
Housewife	42	37	12	9	100	(485)
Retired/unemployed	41	34	11	14	100	(141)
Farming	34	37	13	16	100	(76)
Student	40	38	18	4	100	(60)
Others		-	-	-	-	(9)
TOTAL	41	37	14	8	100	(1686)



QUESTION 5H

"How much do you think each of the following is to blame for the current unemployment situation in Canada

.... Too much immigration to Canada?"

Occupation Group	Very much to blame	Somewhat to blame	Not to blame	No answer	Total	Base
	7.	X.	%	%	z	
Owners, managers, professionals	10	25	60	4	100	(179)
'White collar'	24	24	46	7	100	(428)
'Blue collar'	25	31	37	7	100	(308)
Housewife	19	25	47	8	100	(485)
Retired/unemployed	35	24	28	13	100	(141)
Farming	14	41	29	16	100	(76)
Student	8	25	63	4	100	(60)
Others	-	-	-	-	-	(9)
TOTAL	21	26	45	8	100	(1686)



QUESTION 51

"How much do you think each of the following is to blame for the current unemployment situation in Canada

.... Recent declines in stock market prices?"

Occupation Group	Very much to blame	Somewhat to blame	Not to blame	No answer	Total	Base
	%	%	%	%	%	
Owners, managers, professionals	4	40	49	7	100	(179)
'White collar'	7	47	35	12	100	(428)
'Blue collar'	7	50	31	10	100	(308)
Housewife	7	45	34	14	100	(485)
Retired/unemployed	9	38	32	21	100	(141)
Farming	7	33	42	18	100	(76)
Student	8	53	33	6	100	(60)
Others	-	~~	-	-	-	(9)
TOTAL		45	35	13	100	(1686)



QUESTION 5J

"How much do you think each of the following is to blame for the current unemployment situation in Canada

.... Union wage demands too high for the economy to bear?"

Occupation Group	Very much to blame	Somewhat to blame	Not to blame	No answer	Total	Base
	7.	X	7.	7.	z	
Owners, managers, professionals	60	28	8	3	100	(179)
'White collar'	57	28	9	6	100	(428)
'Blue collar'	45	26	23	6	100	(308)
Housewife	52	30	9	8	100	(485)
Retired/unemployed	67	16	9	9	100	(141)
Farming	71	14	7	8	100	(76)
Student	52	35	10	3	100	(60)
Others	-	-	-	-	-	(9)
TOTAL	55	27	12	6	100	(1686)



PROPOSITION 6A

"I would be willing to pay more (start paying) unemployment insurance so that more assistance can be given to the unemployed"

Occupation Group	Strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer	Total	Base
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Owners, managers, professionals	1	13	12	30	41	3	100	(179)
'White collar'	4	14	14	26	35	7	100	(428)
'Blue collar'	6	16	13	26	33	6	100	(308)
Housewife	4	11	14	30	30	11	100	(485)
Retired/unemployed	7	12	18	21	16	26	100	(141)
Farming	0	7	14	34	30	15	100	(76)
Student	5	15	23	33	20	4	100	(60)
Others	_	-	-	-	_	-		(9)
TOTAL	4	13	14	28	32	9	100	(1686)



PROPOSITION 6B

"The Government should spend more money to provide more jobs, even if it means an increase in the taxes that I pay"

Occupation Group	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer	Total	Base
	%	7.	%	%	%	%	7.	
Owners, managers, professionals	4	28	11	31	21	5	100	(179)
'White collar'	7	21	14	33	18	7	100	(428)
'Blue collar'	9	29	15	23	16	8	100	(308)
Housewife	9	25	15	28	13	10	100	(485)
Retired/unemployed	8	27	17	23	7	18	100	(141)
Farming	7	17	20	32	14	10	100	(76)
Student	10	30	27	22	7	4	100	(60)
Others	-	sia.	es.	-	-	•	-	(9)
TOTAL	8	25	15	28	15	9	100	(1686)



PROPOSITION 6C

*Enough is already being done to help the unemployed. No more Government action is necessary"

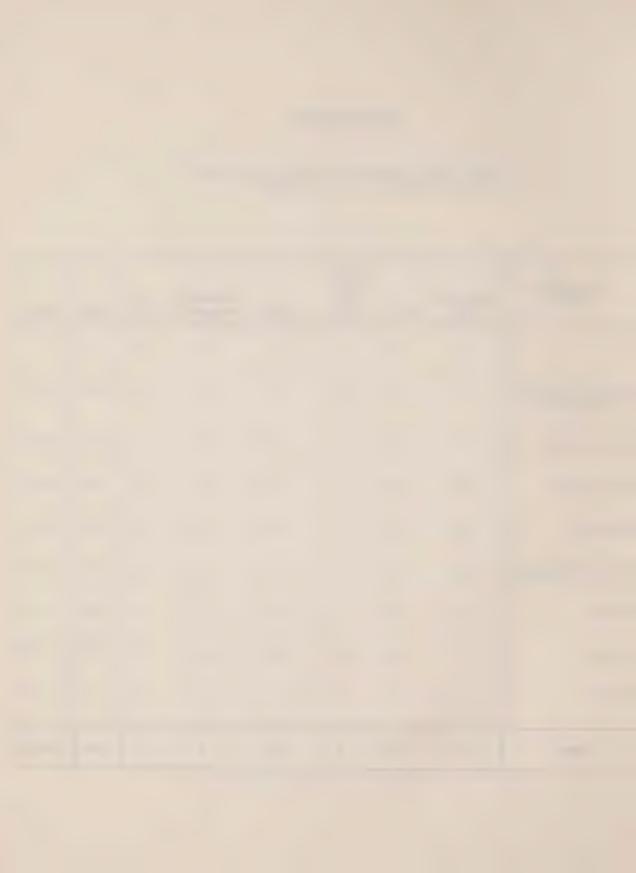
Occupation Group	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer	Total	Base
	%	%	%	%	%	%	7.	
Owners, managers, professionals	8	13	16	39	17	7	100	(179)
'White collar'	10	13	15	38	17	7	100	(428)
'Blue collar'	7	14	11	37	23	8	100	(308)
Housewife	6	14	16	36	17	11	100	(485)
Retired/unemployed	6	17	17	31	10	19	100	(141)
Farming	5	25	16	30	11	13	100	(76)
Student	2	7	13	37	38	3	100	(60)
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(9)
TOTAL	7	14	15	36	18	10	100	(1686)



PROPOSITION 6D

"Many of the unemployed could get jobs if it was not so easy to live on welfare"

Occupation Group	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer	Total	Base
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Owners, managers, professionals	27	28	12	20	8	5	100	(179)
'White collar'	37	30	7	12	· 7	7	100	(428)
'Blue collar'	44	26	7	10	7	6	100	(308)
Housewife	40	27	7	12	5	9	100	(485)
Retired/unemployed	38	26	6	13	4	13	100	(141)
Farming	45	29	4	9	4	9	100	(76)
Student	17	20	18	30	10	5	100	(60)
Others	- Carlo	~	_	-	-	-		(9)
TOTAL	38	28	8	13	6	7	100	(1686)



QUESTION 7

(Asked only of those who were gainfully employed)

"Do you feel that there is any real danger of your being unemployed in the next twelve months - a great danger, some danger, or no danger?"

Occupation Group	A great danger	Some danger	No danger	Total	Bane
	%	%	%	7.	
Owners, managers, professionals	1	22	77	100	(147)
'White collar'	5	30	65	100	(355)
'Blue collar'	7	33	60	100	(252)
All other employed	9	28	63	100	(248)
TOTAL	6	29	65	100	(1012)



Strongly agree I would be willing to pay more I would be will wore I would be will would be well as well would be will would would be will would wou	figure for Canada? (check one) 3.	9						
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